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SUBJECT: THE DISBANDMENT OF ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS (DIAG) IN AFGHANISTAN: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD

REF: TOKYO 02482

Classified By: Political-Military Affairs Counselor
Brent Hartley for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) The Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) for the Stabilization of Afghanistan program, now in its third year of implementation, is showing modest success, has the continued attention of President Karzai, and will soon shift into a phase of significantly greater Afghan ownership. DIAG encompasses three components: disarmament through the District Development Initiative (DDI); administration of Private Security Companies (PSCs); and administration of the weapon registration law. DDI ties disarmament compliance to development assistance and, since April 2007, has resulted in the collection of over 1,600 operational weapons as well as the reported disbandment of most illegal armed groups (IAGs) in 21 targeted districts. Once the Afghan government issues the long-delayed PSC regulation, a Ministry of Interior (MOI) DIAG unit will administer registration and carry out oversight of Afghan and foreign PSCs operating in the country. With elections on the horizon in 2009, Karzai has continued to give DIAG high priority because it provides a political and legal mechanism to counter political opponents who may seek to mobilize armed supporters. The seventh Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB VII) in early February approved transition of DIAG to the MOI, with transition costs paid for by Japan, and a proposal to channel Japanese funding for the first year of the new MOI unit's salaries is currently pending before the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) steering committee. End Summary

Background

¶2. (U) DIAG is one of the five Security Sector Reform pillars for Afghanistan and, as agreed at Geneva in April 2002, Japan is the designated lead donor nation. DIAG was formally launched in March 2005 following President Karzai's decree to institutionalize a DIAG implementation framework. The Disarmament and Reintegration (D&R) Commission, chaired by Second Vice President Khalili and composed of international members, acts as the DIAG steering committee

and reports to the Security Coordination Forum, chaired by President Karzai. A Joint Secretariat (JS), chaired by members of The Afghan New Beginnings Program (ANBP) -- an UNDP entity -- and composed of Afghan government ministries and members of the international community, coordinates day-to-day DIAG operations by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the Provincial Governors.

¶3. (C) In its first year, DIAG operated through a continuation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program, which began in 2003. DDR administered voluntary weapon and ammunition turnover by armed groups and individuals and assisted formerly armed members to find employment. By 2005, the Afghan government reported that DDR had demobilized over 34,000 former combatants and cantoned almost all heavy weapons in the hands of illegally armed groups (IAGs). In April 2006, DIAG shifted from DDR to the more focused &Government Officials with Links to Illegal Armed Groups8 (GOLIAG) Compliance project, which collected data, targeted specific IAGs for disbandment, and prevented or terminated the appointment of government officials against whom there was sufficient evidence of links to IAGs. The IAG-GOLIAG database was created through the combined reporting of Provincial Governors, Afghan ministries and agencies, and the international community. One of Karzai's former advisors, Mohammed Masoom Stanekzai, as Vice-Chairman of the D&R Commission, holds the keys to the GOLIAG database and thereby ensures that the Karzai government is able to target opposition politicians that pose a threat.

DDI Now and Ahead

¶4. (C) In April 2007, following the approval of an action plan by Karzai, DIAG operations shifted phase to encourage greater support from Afghanistan's district and provincial leaders. To achieve this support, the D&R Commission began DDI, a program linking IAG disbandment to development assistance funds (roughly \$100,000 per district). DDI targets a set number of districts in each round (with two rounds initiated to date) and then moves through a three-step process in each district: 1) voluntary IAG disbandment; 2) negotiated disbandment; and 3) "enforced" compliance. The last step involves legal enforcement through the Attorney General's office, but does not exclude the use of force (although to date, there have been no reports of the latter). The JS has asked the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to cooperate more closely with DDI operations in the hope that ISAF forces can assist in situations where force is required. ISAF has kept its distance so as not to find itself in engagements directed by the JS, but has not entirely closed the door to providing force assistance when doing so would serve ISAF operational goals as well.

¶5. (SBU) DDI has made headway in large part because it entices local governments with development funds. Provincial governors, however, are able to influence the compliance process because the JS is reliant on governors to provide information about IAGs in their respective provinces, to include the number of weapons possessed by each IAG. Although the ANSF, ISAF, and UNAMA also contribute information, governors have the largest say in the matter. Thus, a Governor is able to lower the bar or omit IAGs as he or she sees fit. The JS recognizes this loophole and has been working to decrease its reliance on governor-provided information and place pressure from Vice President Khalili's office and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance on the governors to comply in an accurate and non-biased manner.

16. (SBU) The JS currently counts 21 districts as DDI compliant and 30 districts as continuing the disbandment process (out of 364 districts in Afghanistan). These 51 districts are primarily in the North and East where the security situation is relatively stable; DDI is ongoing in only one district in the South. DDI is currently beginning implementation of its third round, which will target an additional 18 districts. JS will attempt to redefine DDI round three districts to complement Focused District Development. Given the work ahead in achieving compliance nationwide, especially considering that no high threat districts have yet been targeted, the D&R Commission has set a planned completion date of 2011.

17. (SBU) In each of the current 51 DDI targeted districts there are between one and 28 assessed IAGs, with some possessing a handful of weapons and others as many as 100. The IAGs however, have predominantly turned in obsolete World War I and II era rifles, leading to the conclusion that IAG members retain more modern AK-type weapons. As a result, the JS is in the process of determining whether to deem a district DDI compliant only when IAGs turn-in AK-type and other modern assault rifles. Regardless, in adding this caveat to DDI compliance, the JS will greatly increase the difficulty of implementation due to expected IAG hesitation to give up modern weapons without compensation.

Afghan Ownership Ahead and PSC Administration

18. (SBU) DIAG currently operates day to day under the coordination of the JS, effectively a UNDP entity with an Afghan director, but it will transition to MOI control in coming weeks. At the June 2007 DIAG Conference in Tokyo, Afghan and donor representatives agreed in principle to place DIAG under MOI administration and enforcement (REFTEL). At the end of 2007, the D&R Commission formally proposed to the international community that the transition of DIAG to the MOI begin immediately. With U.S. support, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board at its February 6 meeting in Tokyo approved a joint D&R Commission and MOI proposal to

add 180 positions to the existing police staffing structure of 82,000 in order to accommodate MOI management of the DIAG program. The Japanese have agreed to fund the first year of salaries for the MOI unit. Due to a prohibition on funding uniformed foreign security personnel, the Japanese will fund the MOI unit by a contribution to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA); formal approval by LOTFA members is expected at the next board meeting later this month. In addition to supporting salaries, the Japanese are also contributing funding for the unit's infrastructure (e.g., vehicles, computers, and phones) that will amount to approximately \$5 million in total.

19. (C) Once established, the DIAG cell in the MOI will have three units which will continue implementation of the DIAG program, administer and enforce the (still-pending) regulations on PSCs, and administer and enforce the weapons registration law.

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